



Disaster and Emergency Management Resources

Helping Children During a House or Building Fire

- Practice stop, drop, and roll. Know how to stop, drop, and roll in case your clothes catch on fire. Stop what you are doing, drop to the ground, cover your face, and roll back and forth until the flames go out. Running will only make the fire burn faster.
- Matches and lighters are tools for "grown-ups." Instruct children to tell an adult right away if they find them or see someone playing with fire, matches, or lighters.
- If a fire starts in your home or you hear the smoke alarm, yell "Fire!" several times and go outside right away. Smoke alarms go off because there is enough smoke and toxic gas to cause harm. Yell to let people know the emergency is real, and they should get out. If you live in a building with elevators, use the stairs. Never try to hide from fire. Leave all your things where they are and save yourself.
- If your escape route is filled with smoke, use your second way out. It is very hard to find your way through thick, heavy smoke. Using your second way out will provide a safer alternative.
- Practice crawling low. If you must escape through smoke, crawl low, under the smoke. Fires produce many poisonous gases. Some are heavy and will sink low to the floor; others will rise, carrying soot towards the ceiling. Crawling with your head at a level of 1 to 2 feet above the ground will temporarily provide the best air. Close doors behind you.
- If you are escaping through a closed door, feel the door, cracks, and doorknob with the back of your hand before opening the door. If it is cool and there is no smoke at the bottom or top, open the door slowly. If you see smoke or fire beyond the door, close it and use your second way out. If the door is at all warm, use your second way out. It is a natural tendency to automatically use the door, but fire may be right outside. Feeling the door will warn you of possible danger.

- If smoke, heat, or flames block your exit routes and you cannot get outside safely, stay in the room with the door closed. Open the window for ventilation, and hang a sheet outside the window so firefighters can find you. If there is a phone in the room, call the fire department and tell them where you are. Seal around doors and vents with towels, or sheets to help slow deadly smoke from entering the room. Wait by the window for help. The first thing firefighters will do when they arrive at a fire is check for trapped persons. Hanging a sheet out lets them know where to find you.
- Get out as safely and quickly as you can. The less time you are exposed to poisonous gases, heat, or flames, the safer you will be.
- Once you are outside, go to your meeting place and then send one person to call the fire department. Ask children in advance if they know where their outside meeting place is. Tell them to go directly to this meeting place in case of a fire and stay there. Gathering in a specific outside location in front will quickly let you know who is outside, and allow you to advise firefighters of who may need help and their probable location inside.
- Once you are out, stay out. Children are often concerned about the safety of their pets, so discuss this issue before a fire starts. In many cases, pets are able to get out on their own. Many people are overcome by smoke and poisonous gases while trying to rescue others, pets, or possessions. No one should go into a burning or smoking building except a trained firefighter who has proper breathing apparatus and protective clothing.
- Firefighters are our friends, and they will help in case of a fire.

Adapted from resource material developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Commission for Environmental Health